

Devotional Studies

Commitment to the Lord

Commitment to Jesus as Lord is a matter for the entire person, not just his or her mind alone. It is in this vein that Jesus responded to an “expert in the Law.” Matthew says that “Jesus replied: **‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind’**” (**Matthew 22:37**). It is true that intellectual conviction is essential, but this is not the whole story. Unless the whole person is involved, the intellectual conviction is useless. James, the Lord’s earthly brother, wrote about intellectual conviction versus commitment. Listen to James as he drives home this point: “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder” (**James 2:19**).

Are you a part of the elect of God? Predestination is, unfortunately, often misapplied by many sincere believers. Whenever one speaks of the elect of God, one must always bear in mind that the eternal decree of God can only be understood in correlation with faith, not separate from faith in Jesus as Lord. The elect are those who love God. One cannot separate election and faith. How can one know that he or she is a part of God’s elect? The answer lies in this: one should cling to His revelation in Jesus Christ and believe in Him. If one does this, one will know that he or she belongs to the elect of God. It goes almost without saying that out of the biblical doctrine of election that one becomes conscious of the biblical mandate for ethics. It is in this vein that Paul writes to the Ephesians about good works following redemption. Listen to Paul as he writes about grace and good works:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (**Ephesians 2:8-10**)

One cannot read this Scripture citation without a realization that God’s grace is first; yet, it is not forced on any individual, but submitted to by one’s free will. Both men and women are treated as individuals who can and should make a free decision to follow or not to follow Jesus. Grace must be accepted by each individual in order to experience salvation through the finished work of Christ upon Calvary. Remember, God binds himself to humanity, but this binding still requires the human response of both men and women in binding himself or herself to God. One’s response to God’s plan of salvation in and through Christ is required in order to become a part of God’s elect. God allows each individual the power of free decision. Whenever one walks in sin, one is in opposition to God. Sin is the proof of God’s bestowed power upon men and women to decide for themselves as to whether to reject or accept His grace. Are you misusing God’s power of

freedom. Sin is one's act against God.

What does the Gospel of God mean to you? Are you conscious that in the Incarnation that God reveals Himself as the God who approaches sinful humanity? In the Incarnation (God becomes flesh), one observes the work of the redeemer. Jesus the Mediator must be understood as an act of God. In other words, it is in Him and only through Him that God does something to humanity. It is in Him that God reveals Himself; It is in Him that God reconciles the world unto Himself. What does God's grace mean to you? Remember, God's grace becomes judgment when one refuses to repent. Repentance means that one accepts the death of Jesus as a divine judgment against sin.

Repentance is an act of faith in Jesus as God's way of salvation. God wants a "yes" to His Gospel, but, at the same time, He wants a "no" to sin. When one repents, there must be a change of disposition, that is to say, there must be a surrender of oneself to God who draws each individual into the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son. When one refuses to repent of his or her former lifestyle of sin, this unreadiness to repent brings God's wrath. Repentance represents, as it were, the death of the person who has deserted God. On the other hand, faith in Jesus brings about life; in Jesus, one becomes a new person. What does faith mean to you? One can say that the highest expression of faith means to live for the Lord and to be an instrument in His kingdom for the furtherance of His Gospel.

What are the fruits of faith? The fruits of the faith are the manifestations of one's repentance. Through fruits of one's faith, one observes the tokens of one's faith in visible form. As one experiences fellowship with God, one meets His love with responding love—the obedience of faith. Remember, justification is by faith alone, but the faith that saves is not alone. Christians do good works, not to be saved, but rather to express thankfulness for His grace. The Gospel is about how God broke through His own law and broke the curse of His law with His presence in and through Jesus. When one accepts Jesus, then the human "I" is dethroned. It is no longer "my will," but "His will."